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U.S. Bureau of Fisheries

The U.S. Bureau of Fisheries

Washington

1934

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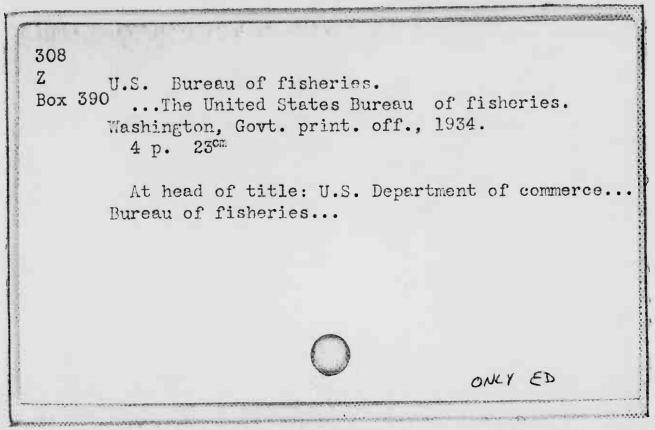

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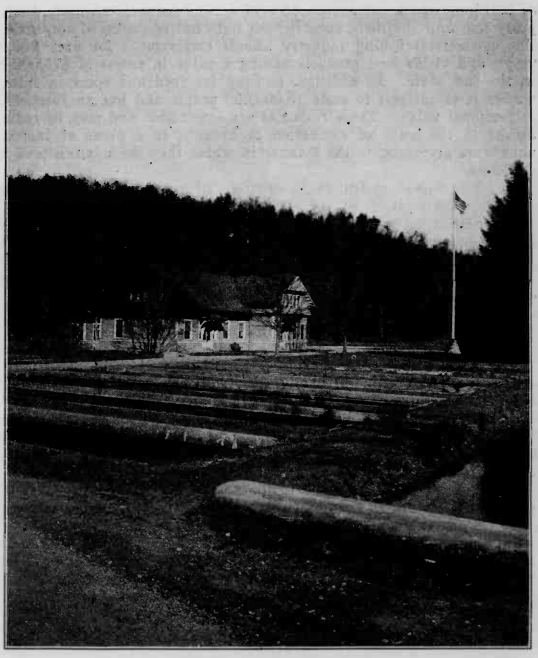
Daniel C. Roper, Secretary

BUREAU OF FISHERIES
Frank T. Bell, Commissioner

The United States Bureau of Fisheries



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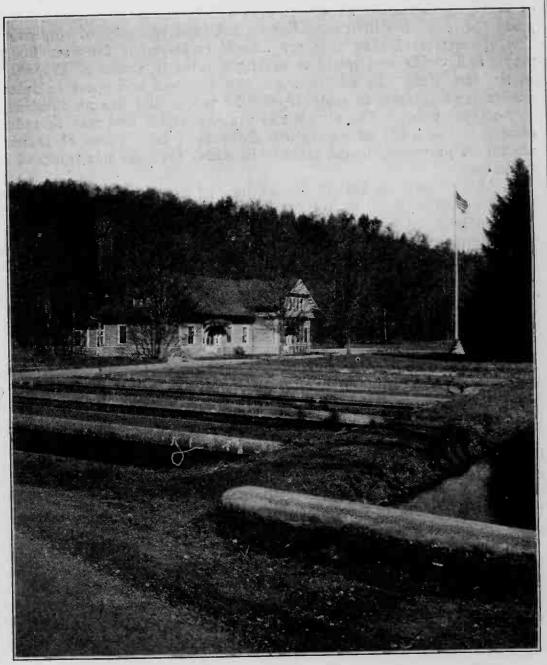

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THE UNITED STATES BUREAU OF FISHERIES

Water has other uses than the floating of cargo vessels, the turning of turbines, or the irrigation of arid acres. Aquatic animals, principally fish and shellfish, constitute a national resource of importance **The commercial fishing industry affords employment for over 200,000 people and yields food products having a value in excess of $75,000,000 in the raw state. In addition, angling for food and sport in interior waters is of interest to some 10,000,000 people and has an inestimable recreational value. These resources are expendible and may be reduced almost to the point of extinction or brought to a plane of increased abundance according to the manner in which they are administered and exploited.**

In order to assure future generations of a supply of marine foods and the continuation of the sport of angling, the Federal Government in 1872 set up machinery to foster wise utilization of the Nation's aquatic resources. This agency is the institution now known as the Bureau of Fisheries, a unit of the Department of Commerce. This Bureau is organized into divisions which attack separate phases of the problem of conserving our fish life.

DIVISION OF SCIENTIFIC INQUIRY

The basis of all conservation measures is facts and information, and these are obtained through the activities of the Division of Scientific Inquiry which conducts biological studies of fish, shellfish, and practically all aquatic organisms. These studies include the life history of important fish. The investigations further look toward improving the yield of oysters by such means as farming them. Studies are made of the hatchery methods and practices in order that more fish may be propagated at a lower cost. Another phase of the work is the determination of forms of nets and fishing gear which will enable the commercial fisherman to secure his catch without excessive destruction of young fish which he cannot market. Laboratories are maintained on each coast to serve as a base, and field parties are constantly at work in various parts of the country searching for the facts which govern the abundance of fish life in interior waters.

DIVISION OF FISH CULTURE

After the ground work of scientific information has been laid down the fish hatcheries enter into the picture. These are really fish factories turning out a living product in the form of baby fish which are planted in the lakes, streams, and in the ocean as replacements for those who fall victim to man. Over 80 of these establishments, similar to the one shown on the cover, are administered

by the Division of Fish Culture. The annual output of young fish and eggs reaches the astounding total of over 7,000,000,000. The production includes some 45 different species of our most important food and game fish, which are distributed in sizes ranging from the newly hatched shad to legal-size trout ready for the frying pan of the angler who is lucky or smart enough to take them.

DIVISION OF FISHERY INDUSTRIES

When biology and fish culture have combined to provide an adequate stock of fish, the Division of Fishery Industries of the Bureau next comes into the picture. This Division performs services for the commercial fisheries and carries out investigations for the development of the products of the commercial fisheries so that our fisheries harvest may yield the greatest possible economic value to the people. Thus it may be seen that this agency, while directly aiding industry, indirectly contributes to conservation. The functions and activities of this Division may be divided into three principal classifications—technological, marketing, and statistical investigations.

Technological investigations include studies of the methods of manufacture, preservation, storage, and marketing of both the primary products of the fisheries for human food and the byproducts for animal nutrition; biochemical tests to determine the food value of these products; the development of fishing gear; and experiments in preparing chemical treatments for fishing nets to lengthen their usefulness.

Marketing and statistical studies are vital in the conduct of any enterprise and the Division is studying marketing and distribution conditions and is collecting statistics not only of economic value to the industry, but which are absolutely essential to the fishery biologist in determining wise conservation measures.

ALASKA DIVISION

While many people may be somewhat familiar with the activities of this Bureau as outlined above, comparatively few are aware that its work is connected with such an unusual enterprise as the maintenance of the fur seal herd in the North Pacific Ocean. By treaty the United States Government was given the custodianship of this herd, which is the principal source of the greatly desirable Alaska seal fur. The herd has been built up from a state of sad depletion to a point where it consists of over 1,300,000 animals. The fourth main division of the Bureau of Fisheries, the Alaska Division, carries on this work in addition to its other function of guarding the salmon and other fishes of Alaska.

There are few grocery stores in the country which do not carry canned salmon upon their shelves and a very considerable proportion of the total pack of salmon comes from Alaskan waters. Since these fish are all taken when they resort to rivers and inshore waters for spawning, there could be wholesale destruction of them unless their right to perpetuate the race was assured by the laws and regulations which the Bureau of Fisheries enforces.

The Bureau of Fisheries also enforces regulations for the conservation of sponge fisheries of the Gulf of Mexico.

ANGLER'S DIVISION

Another unit of this organization works in the interest of the angler and the sport fisherman, first by enforcing a Federal law which affects the interstate transportation of black bass, one of the varieties most eagerly sought by the sportsmen; and second, by the dissemination of information helpful in conserving our sport fishes. These fishes are waging a precarious fight for existence as development and increased population presses upon them. They need all of the help that the Federal Government can give them in cooperation with the States if they are to maintain their numbers and bring to future generations the pleasure and benefit which was the privilege of our predecessors.

The methods, which the Bureau of Fisheries applies in order to accomplish its various purposes, are far apart from the routine stereotyped governmental function. Its activities breathe of the outdoors; and, while they are little advertised, they are essential in assuring continued existence of a resource which the public has hitherto largely taken for granted. There will in the future be fewer fish unless the Government takes the necessary steps to maintain them.

Since Federal fish hatcheries are located in some 35 States many people will sooner or later be in the vicinity of one of these interesting institutions. As Government agencies they are open to visitors, and the opportunity to explain their work will be welcomed. The Bureau of Fisheries urges everyone, who may have the opportunity, to visit any of its activities and to learn more fully the purposes and methods of its work.

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